

Sen. Mitch Tropila, Presiding Officer
Legislative Audit Committee
PO Box 201706
Helena, MT 59620-1706

Dear Chairman Tropila,

I'm writing on behalf of the House Human Services Committee to ask that the Legislative Audit Committee prioritize a performance audit of the Child and Family Services Division of the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) for fiscal year 2014.

During the 2013 legislative session, our committee has heard testimony on several bills relating to the child protective services provided by DPHHS. This testimony has highlighted concerns relating to the processes used by DPHHS to investigate reports of child abuse and neglect and handle abuse and neglect cases.

Although the Legislature has approved several bills and DPHHS has addressed some of the questions raised by committee members, we remain concerned that important management and operational issues have not been fully examined. A subcommittee of the House Human Services Committee further assessed some of the issues raised during hearings. Subcommittee members have identified several areas where a performance audit of child protective services programs could provide valuable insights, including the following:

- the extent to which Montana's child protective services meet national accreditation standards set forth by the Council on Accreditation;
- whether and to what extent additional staff and other resources would be necessary to allow DPHHS to meet national accreditation standards;
- current use of metrics, benchmarks, and other measures of success by DPHHS and how the use of these standards relates to national accreditation standards;
- the use of technology and information systems by DPHHS and the ability of the department to collect, monitor, analyze, and report data related to its child protective services activities;
- DPHHS procedures relating to handling complaints and inquiries from members of the public or parties involved in child neglect and abuse cases;
- the department's procedures for documenting, monitoring, resolving, and following up on complaints, information reports, or inquiries received through the centralized intake system and from mandatory reporters; and

- comparisons between DPHHS child protective services programs and similar programs in other states, with specific focus on staffing levels, caseloads, and the pay and qualifications of case workers.

The House Human Services Committee would appreciate your favorable consideration of this request and looks forward to being kept informed of Legislative Audit Committee deliberations relating to this request.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

David Howard, Presiding Officer
House Human Services Committee

